

Discussion about the effects of alcohol on the growing brain and body

Questions	Possible responses from kids	Leader's messages ¹
<p>What do changes in the eggs [referring to experiment] mean about alcohol and your brain?</p> <p>What effects does alcohol have on the brain? On bodies?</p> <p>What does this mean about its effect on schoolwork? Friends?</p>	<p>The brain doesn't work as well after drinking.</p> <p>Alcohol makes it harder to think clearly and to remember things.</p> <p>Alcohol makes people talk funny.</p>	<p>▶ Alcohol is a central nervous system (CNS) depressant. The main job of the CNS is to send signals throughout the body. For example, the CNS tells you when to raise your hand in class or how to jump over a hurdle. Our brains think of the actions it wants our bodies to do and sends messages to that part of the body. When this system is slowed down by alcohol, the body can't react as quickly to the messages the brain is sending. That is why it is important for people not to drive after they drink alcohol.</p> <p>▶ Besides harming the central nervous system, alcohol can weaken our immune system and make us more likely to get sick or develop diseases.</p> <p>▶ Here are the parts of the body that could be damaged by alcohol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>Heart:</i> Drinking alcohol could cause your blood pressure to rise, increase your heart rate, cause your heart to beat abnormally, and increase the size of your heart. All of these things are bad for you. If you have an irregular heartbeat, you won't be able to play sports or exercise as well as you normally could. — <i>Stomach:</i> Drinking alcohol over a long period of time could cause stomach ulcers or stomach cancer. — <i>Liver:</i> Drinking alcohol could cause diseases such as cirrhosis (pronounced "sir-o-sis"), inflamed liver (hepatitis), or even cancer of the liver. The liver is the largest organ in our body. Its job is to keep poisons like germs and bacteria out of our blood. The liver also makes the protein that causes our blood to clot, and clotting is what causes scabs to form and makes us stop bleeding when we get a cut. We need our liver so we can stay healthy and so our bodies stay clean. Cirrhosis is a disease that damages the liver. It weakens the liver's ability to clot and keep our blood free from poisons and bacteria. People can get cirrhosis in different ways, but drinking too much alcohol is the most common way. — <i>Brain:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Drinking alcohol leads to a loss of coordination, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and even blackouts. This means alcohol won't let you do the things you normally do that require coordination and skill. You can't ride a bike, inline skate, play sports, or even walk in a straight line. The ability to learn, memorize, and remember can be affected by alcohol. – Alcohol can hurt you—even if you're not the one drinking. If you're around people who are drinking, you have an increased risk of being seriously injured, involved in car crashes, or affected by violence. At the very least, you may have to deal with people who are sick, out of control, or unable to take care of themselves. – Some substances that are acceptable for adults are not acceptable for children because their bodies are smaller and they are still growing. Alcohol affects children differently than it does adults.

Discussion about why kids drink

Questions	Possible responses from kids	Leader's messages
Why do you think kids start to drink?	Peer pressure—some friends and classmates want you to do it.	▶ Alcohol advertising tries to sell products by making them look very appealing.
Why do you think someone you know would drink?	Ads make us think everyone drinks.	▶ Actually many studies have shown that the large majority of kids your age, most kids, DO NOT drink, or get drunk! In 8th grade for example, 80% of students report they have not drunk alcohol in the past month.
	Ads show young people drinking	
	We see ads everywhere making it look cool to drink, the way to be popular and have friends.	
	We see older teens and older brothers and sisters drinking.	
	We see our parents or other adults drinking.	
	Alcohol is easy to get—someone always brings it to a party.	

Discussion about what to do if someone is pressuring kids to try a drink

Questions	Possible responses from kids	Leader's messages
Why do you think some kids who don't want to drink feel pressured to drink?	They want everyone to like them.	▶ You can choose not to drink – most kids continue to be alcohol free!
	They don't want to be different.	▶ Sometimes it is easier to use a one-liner that allows you to say no without making a big scene. Some of the following are possibilities: ²
What are some things to say if someone pressures you?	They don't want to create a big scene.	— No thanks.
		— I don't feel like it—do you have any soda?
		— Alcohol's NOT my thing.
		— Are you talking to me? FORGET it.
		— Why do you KEEP pressuring me when I've said NO?